

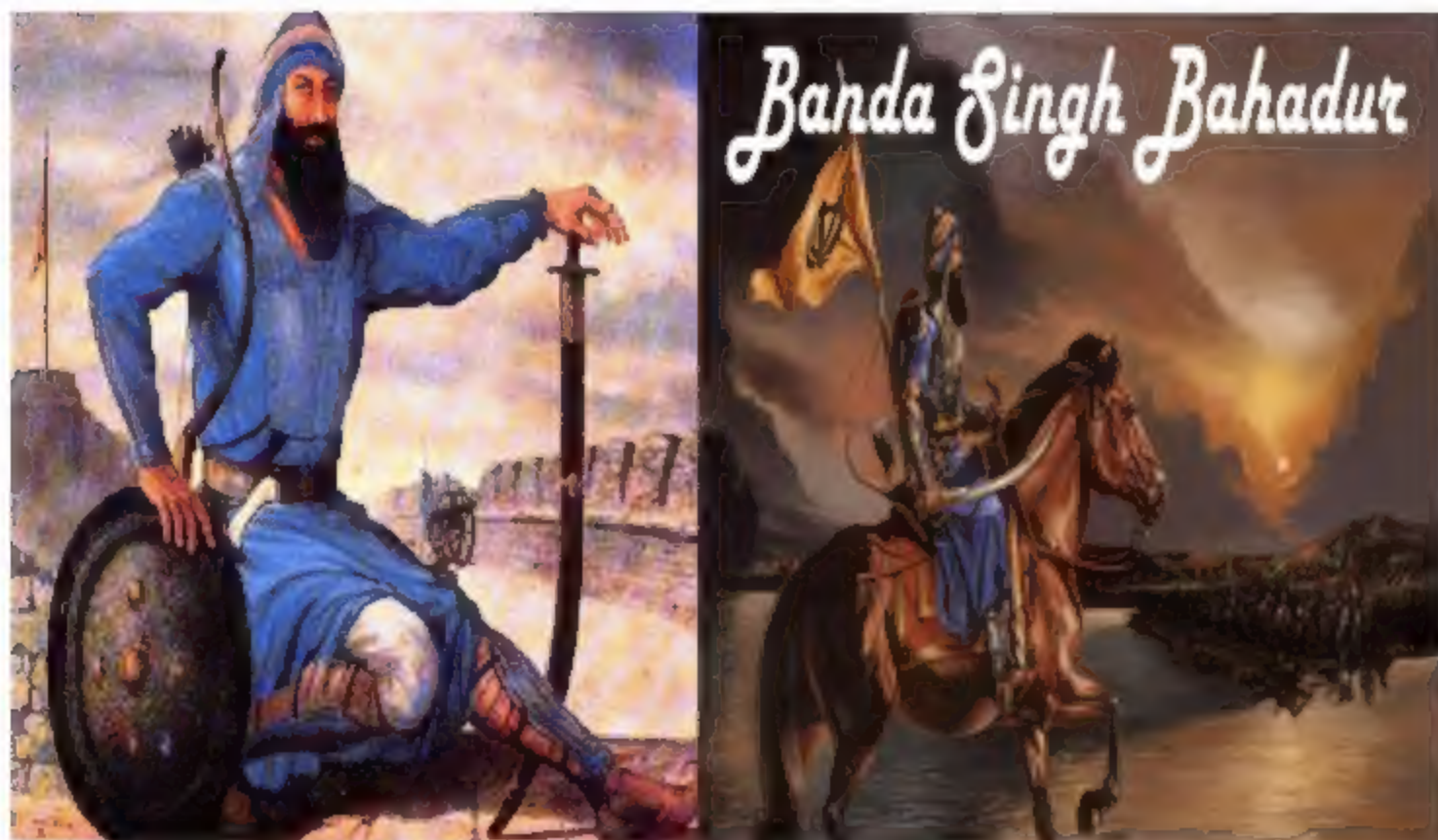
Maharaja Ranjit singh and the Genocides of the Sikhs in 18th century:

By: Bipin Shah

After the 9th Guru and Banda's Last Fight

Several Sikh historians have written many books about the Sikh history covering minutes of the details of their struggle against Muslim rulers, destruction of their family and place of worship and the ultimate short lived success. It is impossible to cover all of them in short narrative here. It is quite clear that the new generation of Indians have never heard of some of these great historical figures who fought for their land and their faith. The attempt is made here by the author to reignite the memories of the Indians who face various challenges at home including security challenges while reviewing our past history.

The memory and contribution of Banda who made utmost personal sacrifice by abandoning his reclusive life style in south India to aid the last Sikh Guru is not held in high esteem by all Sikh followers, perhaps, he was more conscious of his Rajput and Hindu identity than order of Sikh. Banda did not believe in any false religious compromise with ravaging forces of Islam. The previous Gurus of Sikhism tried to strike a compromise with great personal suffering without receiving anything in return.



Banda Singh Bahadur-Rajput-Sikh warrior of the 9th and 10th Guru

After the death of Banda, the active prosecution of Sikhs continued unabated. Many were forcibly converted to Islam or put to death. The losses in the battle against Mughal army were great and depressing during 1708-1716 AD. After 200 years of Sikhism, the Gurus have successfully managed to convince the followers to abandon Hindu idolatry and Muslim's superstitious Sharia laws that inspired the violence, instead emphasized on broad based moral and religious purity. The operation of this reformist fact became a reality in India. Similar events occurred without any violence in Gujarat with the birth of Sthanakvasi and Terapanthi sects of Jainism and also simultaneous rise of Bhakti Marg like Kabirism in North India.

On one hand, this religious reformism was driven and forced up on by ridiculous brahminical order of rituals and on the other hand by Islamist Iconoclasts who were prosecuting Hindu and others who were involved in the idol worshipping. This created further division of the nationality within India. These outdated and bankrupt religious laws such as Sharia or the order of caste division that degrades the humanity and mindless violence creates a form of the apartheid system that must be eliminated at all cost. The inherent contradiction between Islam and Brahminical order provided a splendid opportunity for the Christianity to enter the subcontinent with Europeans who were supposed to be on the trade mission. The Christianity that resembled ancient Buddhism made great inroads with aboriginal people of India and lower caste Indians. Of course, the majority of people prefer Christianity over Islam as the Christianity when examined carefully mimics Buddhism and ancient Shramanic principles of India that once were brought to the west by Greeks and Jews during Achemenians period of Persian history.



Reformist Sthanakvasi & Terapanthi Jainism



Bhakti Marg-Kabirism and Sikhism

Sikh Independence Movements Prior to the Rise of Ranjit Singh **(1716-1764 AD):**

Aurangzeb was the last ruler of Timuroid dynasty of Mughals who presided over the large Indian empire but he ultimately became his own worst enemy. He disrespected his Rajput allies who have really held the Mughal Empire together by providing intelligence, guides and fighters. Akbar and Jehangir knew that and understood that. Aurangzeb unnecessarily created the enemies that he cannot cope with. Instead of judicially ruling his empire, he himself became the cause of strife, disaffection and conflicts. Whatever the fabric of trusts his predecessors had built with his Hindu subjects; Aurangzeb single handedly managed to tear that down due to his ill advised religious bigotry and extremism. In spite of his high intellectual ability and literacy, he allowed himself to succumb to the ideology of the blind faith of 6th century theology born in Middle East where he had no roots. This misinterpretation of hateful ideology against other human beings finally sunk his empire into a deep hole. After his death, his successors turned out to be even weaker than he became in his final days. The decay and decline of the empire was set in and it was a mere question of time. The law hanging fruit was ready to be plucked and the countdown had begun who is going to be the first picker. It turned out to be the obscure and unpredictable Maratha clans of South and Nadir shah or Persia.

Sensing this developments of rots and decay of the Mughal empire, there were wide spread rebellions against Mughals. The south sultanate and Maratha were first to dish out the punishment to occupying Mughal armies. The defeated Mughal commander abandoned their ranks and some of them prefer to sail off for Hajj from the coast of Kuchha to escape punishment from Delhi court. The states of Rajputana, Gujarat, Malwa, Punjab and Bengal started establishing their own local rules. Nadir shah of Persia, a fellow Muslim humiliated the Mughal emperor that forced him to seek mercy after great mayhem at Delhi. Durrani followed Nadir and successively invaded India whenever he ran out of the monies and Mughal treasury obliged without any meaningful resistance.

In short, the Mughals found themselves in receiving end that was in long time coming and well deserved not only from Hindu rulers but also from fellow Muslim rulers of Persia and Afghanistan. After Nadir's withdrawal, the Ahamdiya treaty was signed between the Marathas and Mughals. In the south, Balaji Bajirao became the ruler of Martha after the death of Shahuji, the grandson of Shivaji. Through this treaty, the Marathas controlled virtually the whole of India from their capital at Puna and Mughal rule was restricted only to

Delhi proper. Marathas under Peshwa were now straining to expand their area of control towards the Northwest of India.

Khalsa Panth:

The Khalsa order was born in the intervening years after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur. The Mughal government decided in 1733 AD at the insistence of Zakariya Khan to stop the persecution of the Sikhs and made an offer of a grant to them where they can reside, till the land and live peacefully. The title of Nawab was conferred upon their leader, with a Jagir consisting of the three parganas of Dipalpur, Kanganval and Jhabal.

After consensus building process involving Baba Deep Singh, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Hari Singh Dhillon, Bhai Karam Singh and Bhai Buddha Singh collectively called the Misls (chiefs), they decided to make Kapur Singh, the Supreme Leader of the Khalsa panth. Kapur Singh was thus chosen and Mughal conferred the title of Nawab to Kapur Singh. The Word was spread out to the Sikhs living in isolated regions to return to the Sikh Parganas, as the peace has been restored and their safety has been assured by the Mughals under Mahmud Shah. Kapur Singh undertook the task of unifying the various Sikh Jat and Khatri clans. There is a detailed history in the books on the origin and history of the Misls by various authors that is beyond the scope of this article.

From the organizational point of view, each family was expected to contribute one male member to the "Dal" of Sikh order. They were organized into two sections: The Budha Dal, the army of the veterans, and the Taruna Dal, the army of the young. Hari Singh Dhillon was elected leader of the Taruna Dal. The Budha was entrusted with the task of looking after the holy places, preaching the word of the Gurus and inducting converts into the Khalsa Panth by holding baptismal ceremonies. This branch ultimately produced the religious branch of "Akali-Granthi" for the temple. In times of the conflicts, the veteran Buddha Dal became active along with the younger Budha Dal to meet all sorts of the emergencies. The Akalis were the soldier of Wahi guru, the God. If they became martyr, some of them were called immortals as per their beliefs. Akalis became the fiercest guardians of the Gurudwara, the temple shrine of the Sikh.

Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia were then youngsters of Taruna Dal who led regiments under Hari Singh Dhillon reporting to Nawab Kapur Singh at Diwali and Vaisakhi, two important dates for Sikh gatherings.



Buddha Dal fighters



Budha Singh



Hari Singh Dhillon

Ahmad Shah Durrani who succeeded Nadir Shah of Persia after his death was able to establish Afghan dynasty in 1747 AD after some passing through some internal quarrels for succession. Ahamad Shah invaded Delhi again for the purpose of plunder and withdrew after collecting the coveted booty. On his way back, Ahmad shah Durrani attacked Amritsar and Lahore in 1746 AD. His forces sacked and absorbed Lahore during that expedition.

1746 AD First Genocide of Sikh:

By 1746 AD, in spite of differing accounts, the Lahore had been ceded to Durrani by Mughals but Mughal governor still paying dues to Durrani. The “**Chhota Ghalughara**” (Punjabi) means the small massacre of a significant proportion of the Sikh population led by the Durrani’s Afghan aligned with Vassal viceroy of Lahore to eliminate entire group of Sikhs. A large number of Sikhs, like Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Mehtab Singh had been martyred.

General orders had been issued that no one should give any help or shelter to any Sikh. Durrani’s Afghan armies went about killing every Sikh found anywhere with the help of his Lahore viceroy. When Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia pushed northwards and entered the Eminabad territory in Gujranwala district in 1746 AD, they were attacked by the local landlord (Jagirdar- Jaspat Rai, then Diwan of Yahiya Khan who was the governor of Lahore before Mir Manu). Jassa Singh killed Jaspat Rai during the encounter. This led to the revengeful Lakhpat Rai’s (Jaspat Rai’s brother) to launch relentless campaign against the Sikhs. Lakhpat Rai had replaced his brother who died in the battle as a minister for Yahiya

Khan. He arrested all the Sikhs living in Lahore vicinity, men, women, and children. They were handed over to sweepers for execution.



Bhai Mani Singh tortured by Zakariya Khan



Badal Dal depiction of Sikh warrior

A deputation of Hindus was sent to Lakhpat Rai. They tried to dissuade him from spilling innocent blood. But he was not in listening mood. The terrible order was carried out. All the Sikhs of Lahore were murdered in cold blood. Their only fault was that they were Sikhs. They died for their faith. They became martyrs, all of those men, women and children. None of them agreed to save his or her life by giving up their faith. The orders were issued that no one should follow the Sikh scriptures. A huge army, consisting of Afghan mercenaries, Mughal mercenaries and Hindu Jamindar undertook this mission to destroy Sikhs. The large number of (several thousand) Sikhs had taken shelter in the reedy marshes of Khanuwan; these cannot be crossed by horses and the armored soldiers. The Sikhs crossed the river Ravi followed by the soldiers. The Sikhs were looking for shelter from their Hindu brothers but the intimidation and threat from Lahore deterred them. The Sikhs were defenseless and the hopes were fading with hunger and thirst. The party had to split up. The group with horses marched towards Kartarpur crossing the mountain to join Khalsa group. The other group of men gave up the horses for women and children and stayed behind and take a stand right there against pursuing army.

Those who marched to Kartarpur were able to find temporary shelter at Mandi and Kulu while enduring great hardship and several perished during the long march. But some of them were able to reach Kartarpur and join the Khalsa group. The remainder group of Sikh men who stayed at the river pushed towards the pursuing army. They were surrounded by Afghan soldiers and the Hundreds of them were killed. Some were taken prisoners. The remaining Sikhs were pursued into the jungle. Lakhpat Rai finally had grown tired of fighting and returned to Lahore. In this campaign Durrani must have killed at least 10,000 Sikhs. This was called "**Chhota Ghalughara**" or the Lesser Holocaust. In a simple term this was ethnic

cleansing on religious ground. This is a shameful act on the part of some of the Hindu Jamindar who colluded with the foreigners and shun their own Sikh brothers out of sheer selfishness or an act of the revenge.



Crossing of the River Ravi and the first genocide of the Shikh

MIR MANU (Shortened from Mu'in ul-Mulk):

Initially, Mir Mannu or Manu was the appointed Governor of Lahore and Multan by Mughal emperor of India. The failure of Mughal emperor to dispatch army to assist him in the face of impending Durrani's raid forced him to sue for the peace and he became the vassals of Durrani. Mughal ultimately ceded Lahore to Durrani. Mahmud Aslam who accompanied Durrani captures the actual events that took place. FARHATU-N NÁZIRÍN OF Muhammad Aslam captures the related information in his book: "Ahmad Shah Durrani with the renewed intention of conquering Hindustan, arrived in the neighborhood of Sodra, and Mir Mu'ínu-l Mulk, alias Mir Mannu, left Lahore with an army for the purpose of expelling him; but, being unable to take the field against him, he entrenched himself. The nobles and mirzas of Dehli hoped that Mir Mannú might be destroyed, and after this desirable event they would take measures against the Durrani. They would thus extirpate the thorn which the race of the Túránís (Turk) had planted on their side by agitating Jats Sikhs. The Mir requested assistance from the Emperor of Dehli and his minister for four months, but all in vain. Adina Beg under pressure from Kora Mal (Minister) reluctantly joined Mu'in-l Mulk against the Durrani, and, availing himself of his opportunity in the midst of battle, instructed one of the Afghans of Kusr to put an end to the existence of that unworthy wretch Kora Mal by a musket-ball. In consequence of his death, the army of Mir Mannú suffered a complete defeat, and he was obliged to send for his horse, and, advancing with some of his personal attendants, proceeded to kiss the threshold of the Durrani, who honored him with the grant of a valuable Khilat and the title of Farzand Khan. Mannu thus was obliged to sue for peace, and he persuaded the Durrani to return to Kandahar by assigning to him four Parganas of Sialkot, Parsarur, Gujarat, and Aurangabad of Punjab, that had belonged to Kabul from the time of Alamgir Aurungzeb."

This report tells us what made Turk Manu to switch side to Durrani's Afghan. Some of the high officials in Mughal court did not approve the high handedness and brutal treatment against the Sikhs.

Prior to switching side to Durrani, why high official of Mughal court felt that the brutal tactic employed by Mir Manu was counterproductive against Sikhs and leading to further destabilization of Mughal empire is described below:

"In times of relative calm in between Afghan campaigns towards Hindustan, the Governor of Lahore and his Turkish/Khorasani allies resumed their genocidal campaigns against the Sikhs. These were characterized by the desecration of places of Sikh worship and the organized capture, torture and execution of tens of thousands of Sikh men, women and children. Diwan Khan was replaced by Mir Manu after the first massacre. Unfortunately, Mir Manu turned out to be even worse than the Khan who was replaced as a new governor of Lahore and Multan in April 1748 A.D. He appointed Kaura Mal as his new minister replacing Lakhpat Rai. After setting right the administration of his province, he deployed the Afghan army to capture remaining the Sikhs living in the province of Lahore. After first genocide, most of the Sikhs had left their ancestral region of Lahore and moved to other states south. In the meantime, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and his squad joined the army of the Commander of Jalandhar Amin Beg. Mughal Wazir felt very uncomfortable as the news arrived from Lahore."

The Turk Mir Manu certainly will go down in the history of India as an evil force for displaying the borrowed and corrupted form of the religious fanaticism of Islam that is devoid of human values and basic decency, almost resembling early age of cannibalism. As a governor of Durrani, he did not hesitate to inflict terror and persecution against fellow human being that speak loudly of his moral values and the culture of violence by their allies. He resumed the persecution of the Sikhs. Moreover, he had arranged for the new cavalry to be forged from the unit of 900 men assigned especially to the hunting down "infidels" Sikhs. In the words of a Sikh historian:

"Manu appointed most of the gunmen to the task of chastising the Sikhs. They ran after these infidels up 42 miles a day and slew them wherever they stood up to oppose them. Anybody who brought a Sikh head received a reward of ten rupees per head."

According to the same account, "The Sikhs who were captured alive were sent to hell by being beaten with wooden mallets. At times, Adina Beg Khan sent 40-50 Sikh captives from the Doab. They were as a rule killed with the strokes of wooden hammers."

Mir Manu enjoyed visiting torture chamber like Hitler's notorious doctor who visited the Gas Chambers that put many Jewish men, women and children to death. There are no memorials or museum of this holocaust of the Sikh, nor any references found in the school text books of India. Thanks to delusional Pseudo-secularists who are afraid to admit the true history. This can be attributed to earlier government's efforts to appease certain group to suppress and

distort the real history. The truth cannot be suppressed forever and the martyrdom of the Sikh womenfolk and children cannot be forgotten. "The women were seized from their homes and put to grind grain in the prison. Many were given merciless lashing. Each of the detainees was given 450 kilos (half a ton) of grain to grind in a day. With no food and water, they collapsed on the stone mills. As their children, hungry and thirsty, wailed and writhed on the ground for a morsel, the helpless prisoners in the clutches of the tyrants could do little except solace them with their affection. Wearied from crying, the hungry children would at last go to sleep."

The Sikh Historians recall the instances when the Sikh children were being hacked to pieces in front of their mothers. The bits of flesh would be thrown around the mothers' necks like garlands. This was so sickening that it should put all silent witnesses to the shame including the Turkish, Afghan and Khorasani mercenaries who contributed to the genocide. Mir Manu's cruel reign (1748–53 AD) had little effect on the spirit of the Sikh fighters. From their suffering and sacrifice, they derived their internal strength. Their resolve was strengthened and their followers grew in the numbers. In about face, many Hindus joined the Sikh Panth. The effect of Manu's tyranny had created exactly opposite effect to what he had intended. The historical suffering gave them the inspiration, power and unity to mount a military resistance to any and all the invaders and boot them out of the land of India. The Sikhs unlike other Indian citizens of the south of India took the brunt of all the invasions that originated from Afghanistan.

The Sikhs gathered at Amritsar on the occasion of Diwali in 1748 A.D. When Mir Manu came to know of the gathering of Sikhs, he sent his general with an army to blockade Amritsar and sent words to the Commander of Jalandhar, Adina Beg to take his contingent to help his general in finishing off the Sikhs. Five hundred Singh took shelter in fort of Ram Rauni (Ramgrah) and the rest were moved to the forests. The combined forces of Lahore and Jalandhar surrounded the fort. The Singh inside the fort did not surrender even after two months of siege. Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia was in Adina's army from Jalandhar who was engaged in the siege of fort with his troops. One day he deserted the Imperial army and joined his fellow faithful Singh inside the fort with his squad. Adina Beg felt betrayed but could not do anything.

At this time Kaura Mall intervened and prevailed upon Manu to recall his troops. This change of the heart of Manu was partly influenced by his Hindu minister, Kaura Mall (sympathetic to Sikh cause) and partly due to the fear of impending threat of another Durrani invasion. Mir Manu relented. However, this truce lasted until the passing away of Kaura Mall in the battle against the Afghans in 1752 AD and the surrender of Lahore to invader Durrani as described above in "FARHATU-N NÁZIRÍN by Muhammad Aslam".



Jassa singh Rajgriha



Barbarity of Headhunter -Turk Mir Manu



Ram Rauni (Ramgrah) Fort

The differing accounts given by some Sikh chroniclers are confusing, as to who the viceroy of Lahore reported to? Did he report to Mughal of Delhi who exercised nominal control? How and when he became vassal to Durrani? The author hopes that this account given here clarifies the picture. Mir Manu was of Turkish origin from Khorasan region, typically of brutal mentality of that period with no regards for the human life. He prosecuted Sikh regardless who he worked for. His prosecution intensified under Durrani as there was no one to restrain him. The history has shown that Afghan Turkish tribes of the past were treacherous looters of Hindustan's riches. Their conversions to Islam accentuated their rationalization of the thievery and violent culture as seen from the rise of the present Taliban of Afghanistan. The President of United States have labeled them as "Khorasani" group ,who historically resided on the Northern part of Afghanistan (Khorasan to Turkmenistan) and also included various Pashtun, Balochi and Turkish tribes. The same group of people came as mercenaries with Ghazni, Ghorl, Nadir and Durrani's armies for plunder, murder and pillage. Durrani with his Balochi, Afghani and Khorasani cohorts and mercenaries conducted numerous raids. Durrani did not spare their faith followers of Hindustan either. The Mughal ruler fell on Durrani's knee and ceded Sindh and all of the Punjab including the vital Trans- Indus River region to him during 1747 AD. This was done just to save his hide. This cost Mughals the final legitimacy, they enjoyed, ruling over the Hindustan. Durrani having thus gained substantial territories to the east without a fight, Ahmad Shah Durrani and his Afghan forces turned westward to take possession of Herat in Afghanistan, which was ruled by Nadir Shah's

grandson. They finally appointed their own Governor at Lahore replacing Manu after his death.

1762 AD - The Second Genocide of Sikh:

When Durrani ran out of monies, he knew where to go. He marched on to put his hands in Hindu's pockets. The filthy thieves of Durrani bunch (just like their historic predecessors Ghazni and Ghor) returned for a sixth campaign of conquest of theft (1759-61 AD). The Sikh fighters decided to attack the town of Jandiala, just 11 mi east of Amritsar and the home of Aqil, the traitor of Punjab and a friend of Durrani. He was the ruling head of the Niringania sect and an enduring foe of the Sikhs. Aqil feeling surrounded by Sikh warriors sent messengers to Durrani pleading for his help against the Sikhs. The Afghan forces hurried to Jandiala, but by the time they arrived the siege had been lifted and the besiegers were gone.

The Sikh fighters had retreated with a view to taking their families to the safety far away before returning to confront the invader. When the Afghan leader came to know the whereabouts of the Sikhs, he sent word ahead to his allies in Malerkotla and Sirhind to stop their advance. Durrani then set about on a rapid march, covering the distance of 150 miles, including two river crossings, in less than forty-eight hours. In the twilight of dawn, Durrani and his allies surprised the Sikhs, who numbered about 50,000, most of them non-combatants. It was decided that the Sikh fighters would form a cordon around the slow-moving baggage train consisting of women, children and old men. They would then make their way to the desert in the south-west by the town of Barnala, where they expected their ally Alha Singh of Patiala to come to their rescue. Account of this even is described here:

"Fighting while moving and moving while fighting, they kept the baggage train marching, covering it as a hen covers its chicks under its wings. More than once, the troops of the invader broke the cordon and mercilessly butchered the women, children and elderly inside, but each time the Sikh warriors regrouped and managed to push back the attackers."

When two fighting forces reached a water source, the fighting ceased as the fighters and horses went for the water to quench the thirst and recover their strength. After this the forces went separate ways. The Durrani forces had inflicted terrible human catastrophe on Sikh community of India. Durrani forces in turn have suffered the heavy casualty themselves after a long march without any rest for several days with many of their ranks and files were killed and wounded. They were willing to terminate the fight by taking some Sikh prisoners to Lahore.

The estimated numbers of this second genocide varies. Some estimates runs between 30,000 to 50,000 Sikhs, who lost their lives on that horrific day of 5th February 1762 AD. It is doubtful that the entire Sikh order exceeded more than 100,000 followers. This meant one fourth to one half of the followers of the Sikhism was wiped out with their families. This is an important lesson for Hindus to learn. The country lives in the hostile neighborhood and every Indians who value their own and their loved ones' safety need to be vigilant and band together for the common defense, irrespective of their religious preference. The Sikhs were not the only people who were targeted; the Hindus, especially Brahmin and Khatri Intellectuals who offered shelters to the Sikhs were massacred along with Sikhs.



Location and depiction of big massacre of Sikh 1762 AD

Maratha and Durrani:

In the meantime, earlier to this event, to counter the Durrani's Afghans and Balochi forces, Peshwa Balaji Bajirao sent Raghunathrao to North. He succeeded in ousting Timur Shah Durrani from Delhi and brought Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and other tributaries including the area of Attock under Maratha rule. Shah Waliullah of Delhi wrote to Ahmed Shah Durrani asking for his help. **The brother-in-faith** declared jihad (Islamic holy war) against the Hindu Maratha during 1761 AD. Maratha after Shivaji' death had abandoned their unique techniques of guerilla warfare "hit and run" that usually accompanied with the use of diplomacy and intermittent peace treaties with no harassment to common people.

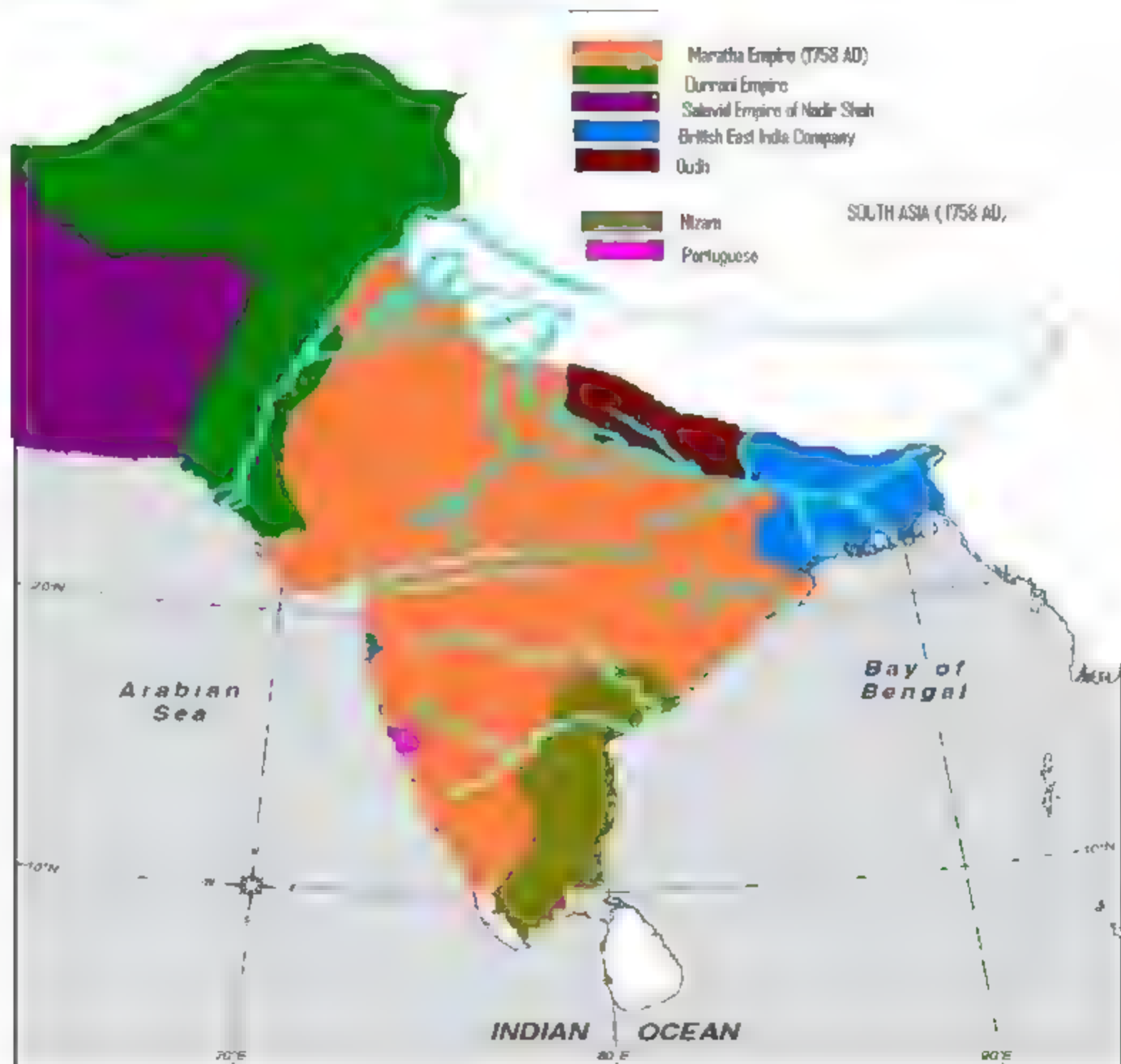
The Maratha groups had coalesced into a big enough conventional army under the command of Sadashivrao Bhau but needed a long and assured supply line to repulse Durrani. They solved this logistical problem by looting and scavenging from the land they traversed. This turned out to be a wrong approach of needed a reliable and paid for logistical support. Shivaji would have used the diplomacy rather than coercion with fellow Hindu Rajput clans. The Maratha armies' behaviors caused great discomfort and angers in Rajputana, Malwa and Gujarat who themselves were experiencing the food shortage by repeated incursions and plunders by invaders and the harsh religious taxation by Mughal Governors. The Hindus of affected regions felt no difference in their condition between Muslims and Maratha rulers with their equal habit of pillage and inflicted financial burden. The Maratha are highly patriotic people but at times they do not use diplomatic means to accomplish their objective. These examples are fresh with certain behaviors of Shiv Sena and similar condition existed during Peshwa period. **The diversity of India must be taken into account to build coherent and cohesive national identity.**

Once again, Panipat became the scene of a battle for the control of northern India. The Third battle of Panipat (January 1761 AD) was fought between largely invading Afghan and Balochi armies of Durrani and Rohilla Afghan against the largely Hindu Maratha army. The battle was waged along a Seven miles front and resulted in to a decisive victory for Ahmad Shah Durrani. The reason were obvious, none of the antagonized Rajput armies came to the aid of Maratha due to their past behaviors in ravaging the fields of their counties and they swarm through like the locust. This was the misfortunate event for Hindus. If Hindu would have won, the British would have been deterred and India would have avoided 300 hundred years of the colonial rule. The battle is considered one of the largest fought in the 18th century AD and it did result in the largest number of the casualties. The most crucial element in the battle was the critical support of Nawab of Awath, Shuja-ud-Daula. Maratha expected his support and at the last minute he betrayed Maratha by joining with the **brother-in-faith Durrani's** forces.

FARHATU-N NÁZIRÍN by **MUHAMMAD ASLAM** gives us the details of this battle. Baji Rao had a superior force of 200,000 horse, 20,000 foot soldiers, and 300 guns at his disposal and in those days it was considered sufficient fire power to stop the marauders with a disciplined army and good military strategies. As per this Muslim historian:

"Maratha army entered the city of Delhi and having taken the fort from the officers of the Durrani proceeded to Kunjpura and Sirhind. Abdu-s Samad Khan and seven other officers who were stationed at the former place, with a body of 20,000 horse and foot, offered resistance, and after a battle lasting about one hour were cut down and slain. Peshwa Bhao plundered Kunjpura, sent those who were taken alive to prison, and pitched his

Panipat with Maratha, probably taking the cues from the Rajputs. The flawed diplomacy on the part of Marathas did not recognize the strategic potential of Sikhs and Rajput warriors in confronting Durrani. It was their fatal blunder for the major defeat that fell on Maratha and the nation. The Maratha achieved a huge accomplishment for over 100 years of fight with Mughals by guerilla warfare; it seems their big dream melt away by not following the right military strategies. The lack of intelligence on enemies, failure to seek allies, and long undependable logistic and lack of proper military strategies against Durrani did a major psychological blow. In spite of numerical superiority, Marathas were delivered a severe blow from which it did not recover fully. Ala Singh of Patiala actually aided Durrani and not Maratha.



Maratha Empire at its Peak

As a reward for maintaining neutrality, Ahmad shah Durrani granted Ala Singh of Patiala, the right for the control of the Sikh holy temples and he was named the first Sikh Maharaja. All the Rajput vassals who did not side with Maratha were allowed to keep their domains in Northwest India, unmolested.

However, shortly after the rout of Maratha at the third Battle of Panipat in 1761 AD, the Sikh continued their struggle and decided to increase their penetration deeper into the Lahore region of Punjab due to its importance to them as birthplace of their first Shikh Guru and shrine.

Settling score with Afghan:

After two genocides and massacres of Sikhs by agents of murderous Mughal and Afghan's viceroys, Sikhs were more united than ever. The Sikhs were not cast down but their recruitments increased exponentially. Many Hindus converted to Sikhism for sole purpose to avenge the injustice and merciless killing handed to them by the thugs of Kabul. They were bent on the revenge and many leaders sprang up. Within a few months the Sikhs attacked Sirhind and moved to Amritsar. In 1764 AD, the Sikhs shot dead Jain Khan, Durrani Governor of Sirhind. Jain Khan gave battle to 40,000 Sikhs and was defeated and slain. The Sikh army captured Sirhind and surrounding region and it was divided among the Sikh Misldars and monies recovered from the treasury were used to rebuild the Harmandir Sahib. Gurudwara Fatehgarh Sahib was built in Sirhind; at the location were the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh were martyred. The Sikhs started striking Govind Shahi coin in 1765 AD and they took over Lahore again. The Sikh considered Lahore Pargana as a part of their holy land. The Sikh captured Lahore in 1764 AD, where they established first Khalsa rule extending from Jhelum to the banks of Yamuna.

Ahmad Shah Durrani, fearing Sikh retaliation and retribution, sent messages that he was willing to assign some areas to the Sikhs to be ruled by them. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia rejected his offers and told him that Sikhs own the Punjab and they do not recognize his authority of Durrani or his appointees. Durrani went to Amritsar and destroyed the Harmandir Sahib again by filling it up with gunpowder hoping to eliminate the source of "life" of the Sikhs. The Mughal dominance and rule was progressively weakening, sensing ultimate collapse of Durrani Empire that was built at huge cost, Ahmad Shah Durrani for the last time declared Jihad against the Shikhs in the name of Islam and defeated the Sikh in 1765 AD. While Durrani was demolishing the Harmandir Sahib, he was hit on the nose with a brick; later in 1772 Durrani died of cancer from the 'gangrenous ulcer' that consumed his nose (Wahi Guru's curse).

When Ahmed Shah Durrani came again in 1767 AD from Kabul, he sent messages to the Sikhs for their cooperation. He offered them the governorship of Punjab but was rejected. The Sikhs using repeated Guerrilla attacks took away his caravan of 1,000 camels loaded with fruits from Kabul. The Sikhs were again in control of the areas between Sutlej and Ravi.



Coins Shahi Coin



Defeated Misldars Jassa Singh Aluhawalia Gujar Singh Bhangi

Rise of Ranjit Singh

Ranjit Singh was born in Gujranwala region of Punjab during November 1780 AD. When he was a child, the smallpox virus attacked him and cost him one of his eyes. During his early life, the Punjab was ruled by the Sikhs Confederacy called "Sarbat Khalsa system" that divided the Punjab among section called "Misls". The Misls is an Arabic word and literary equates to Indian word "Sardar" or the "chief". Ranjit Singh's father Maha Singh was the Commander of the Sukerchakia Misls and controlled the territory in the west Punjab based around his headquarters at Gujranwala district. Maharaja (Great King) Ranjit Singh, a member of Shansi Jat clan and Sukerchakia Misls, integrated all the Misls and ultimately established the Sikh empire in the North-West India. As a young soldier, he participated with his Grandfather, a Misls (Sardar) in his campaign against Durrani. At very young age, he became a proficient warrior.

When Durrani returned to Kabul to attend the matters at home, the Northwest India remained in shambles. Durrani left his deputies in India to maintain the control but they were ineffective. The Sikhs tested and probed Durrani's weaknesses as a predatory band hovering over Durrani's left over troops and deputies and their supply lines. The Sikhs used Guerilla tactics to pillage Durrani's armies supply line and stole the weapons and foods. For the purpose of the controlling the strangers entering their home town region, many Sikh chiefs

started building the forts as a new defensive structure or resurrecting the old destroyed ones. Charat singh, Grandfather of Ranjit singh built one fort himself at Gujranwala.

Jai Singh Kanheya's daughter-in-law, Sada Kaur a young widow was a great woman with considerable diplomatic skill. Sada Kaur saw the futility of rivalries within Sikh confederacy and convinced Maha Singh to adopt the path of the friendship. As a gesture of his good will and intention, she offered the hand of her daughter, then only a child, to Maha's son, the young boy Ranjit (who becomes the Maharaja of the Punjab). This matrimonial alliance shifted the balance of power among the Misls in favor Ranjit Singh and became the first step in the consolidation of united Misls. This made Ranjit Singh the leader of the most powerful union of two Misls. Over the period of time, Ranjit Singh's Sikh empire embraced the whole of the undivided Punjab (pre-partition Kashmir) and a part of Tibet. Even though Maharaja Ranjit Singh was a Sikh Jat, during his rule he treated every individual and community with justice and equality and became very popular with the people of India inside and outside of the empire.

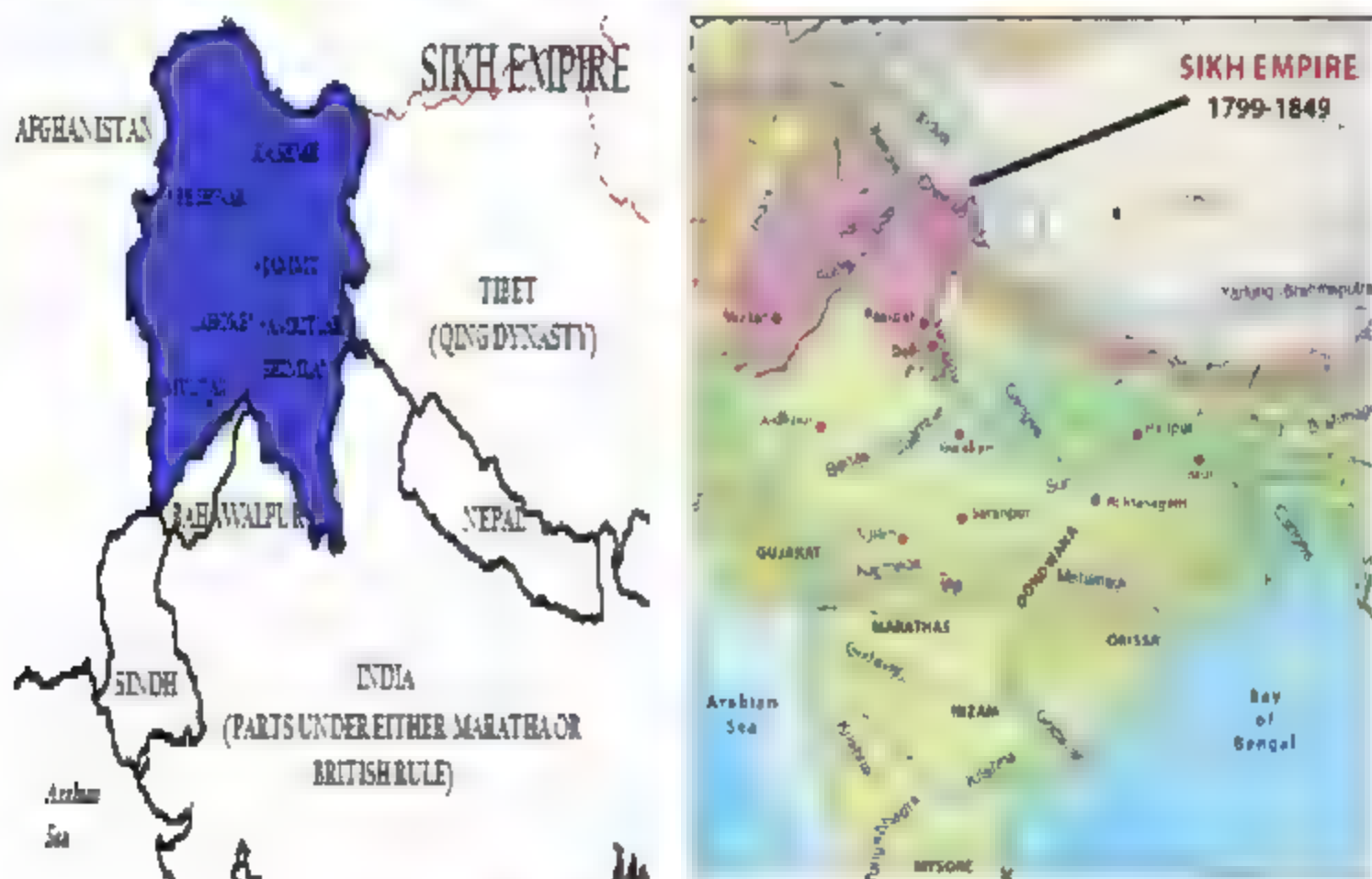


Formation and division among Misls (Sardar)-Punjab pre-British period

Conquest and Consolidation

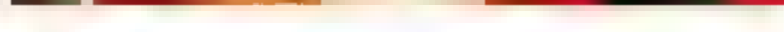
Ranjit Singh captured Lahore from the Bhangi Misls in 1799 AD and later made Lahore his capital. The Lahore area was his ancestor's region and was connected with the first Guru Nanak. This was the important step in his rise to the power. Ranjit Singh's earliest campaign as a young Misdar (Sardar) was accomplished by defeating his coreligionists, other Sikh Misls. He dislodged Bhangi Misls to secure Amritsar and dislodged Afghan Qutubudin from Kusr. All these Misldars were appointed by Durrani after victory at Panipat. Ranjit Singh felt necessary to bring them under one banner for the unification of Shikh-Khalsa movements against the invaders.

In the following years he brought the whole of the central Punjab from the Sutlej to the Jhelum under his control. After several campaigns, he conquered the adjoining areas to assemble the Sikh Empire. After accomplishing total control of all Punjab, he set his sight in expanding further north and west to include the Kashmir, Swat valley and Indus Doab and thus securing the routes of invasion by Afghan through North West Frontier. With the capture of Multan in 1818 AD, the whole Bari Doab came under his rule. Ranjit Singh followed this up by successfully annexing Kashmir in 1819 AD. This was followed by subduing the tribes living around Kashmir Mountains (Hazara of Pakistan and Pakistan held Kashmir).



Map of Sikh Empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1799-1849 AD

Noelle,





Hari Singh Nalia-commander of Ranjit Frenchman in service of Ranjit's military



Fort of Lahore

Ahmad Shah Durrani died on 16th October 1772 AD in Kandahar Province. Ahmad Shah's victory over the Marathas influenced the history of the subcontinent and, in particular, British policy towards India. Durrani's refusal to continue his campaigns further into India prevented a direct clash with the East India Company. British were relieved and took the opportunity to acquire power and influence in Bengal at a leisurely pace in 1793 AD. The lack of nationalism among Indians and unity played a major role. This ultimately resulted in total control of Bengal and ultimately entire India to British. The possibility of sheer fear of Afghan invasion chilled the heart of British East India Company at one time and lasted for several decades of Durrani's period. The successors of Ahmad Shah proved as weak as Mughal rulers of Delhi and Sikh took advantage of that.

Ranjit Singh was crowned as the Maharaja of Punjab on April 12th 1801 AD. He was hardly 21 years old at the time. Appropriately, the coronation was performed by Sahib Singh Bedi, a descendant of Guru Nanak. Summarizing, Ranjit's accomplishments were huge. He spent the following years fighting the Durrani rulers of Afghanistan. After driving them out of Punjab, Ranjit Singh and Sikh army invaded ethnic Pashtun territories in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He captured Multan which encompassed the southern parts of Punjab and Peshawar in 1818 AD, Jammu in 1812–13 AD and Kashmir in 1819 AD. Some details are shared here.

Ranjit Singh's general Diwan Mokham Chand led the Sikh forces against the Afghan forces of Shah Mahmud and Dost Mohammad Khan in 1813 AD. Following this encounter, the Afghans lost their stronghold at Attock. Mokham Chand was Khatri tradesman from Gujarat region of Punjab. Ranjit Singh had seen Mokham in action at Akalgarh a few years earlier and again in the fight against the Bhangi Sardar of Gujarat of Punjab. Mokham Chand Nayyar had fallen

out with his master and had come to Ranjit for employment. Ranjit appointed him as a chief commanding a cavalry and 1500 foot soldiers. He gave him arms, horse and a Jagir. He was later appointed as the commander in chief of armies in the Battle of Attock which defeated Durrani Empire Wazir Fateh Khan and Dost Mohammad Khan together. The genealogy of Ranjit Singh given above claimed his descent from Guru Nanak himself.

One more attempt by Pathans near the mouth of the Indus river valley plateau, Ranjit Singh defeated a large army of Yusufzai tribesmen in 1823 AD, while the presence of his Sikh General, Hari Singh Nalwa prevented the entire Afghan army from crossing this river and going to the aid of the Yusufzai at Nowshera. This defeat led to the gradual loss of Afghan power in present-day of Pakistan. The Khalsa forces marched into Peshawar, the ruling Barakzai Pathans retreated without offering a fight in 1834 AD. The real power of Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to the fore when his commander-in-chief, Hari Singh Nalwa, kept the entire army of Amir Dost Mohammad Khan at bay, with a handful of forces till reinforcements arrived from Lahore over a month after they were requisitioned in April 1837. The Battle of Jamrud in 1837 AD became the last confrontation between the Sikhs and the Afghans. Hari Singh Nalwa was killed during the battle while the Afghans retreated to Kabul to deal with the Persian invasion on its western border in Herat and internal fighting between various tribes and Durrani princes. The new minister Jawahar Singh was nominated and Gurumukh Singh Lamba was appointed by Ranjit as a security adviser to safeguard the territorial gains of the Sikh empire.

Qadi Nur Mohammed, who accompanied Ahmad Shah Durrani and was present during many Sikh battles, wrote about the Sikh's war conduct and ethics:

"The Sikhs do not kill a woman, a child, or a coward running away from the fight. They do not rob any person nor do they take away the ornaments of a woman, be a queen or a slave girl. They commit no adultery; rather they respect the women of even their enemies. They always shun thieves and adulterers and in generosity they surpass Hatim." This is a very generous statement from Muslim writer.

Ranjit Singh's Military Power:

Ranjit Singh developed a formidable military power that helped him carve out an extensive North West kingdom that blocked the invasion route to India from Persia and Afghanistan and help shield India from hostile and ambitious neighbors. The creation of this empire was a result of his genius. From the scarce force of Misls that he inherited, comprised solely of horsemen, where everyone was required to bring their own horse and weapon that he could afford or acquire. He accepted the volunteers without military training but provided the

regular training and command organization. From that point onward, Ranjit singh developed a modern fighting army capable of thwarting the advance of hostile neighbors and even early British east India Company's army.

The Members of his government were completely secular and members of various communities served in his kingdom. His Foreign Minister was a Muslim and his Treasurer was a Hindu. The Commanders of his army were Sikhs, Jat Sikhs farmers, Muslims, Hindus, French, Italian, and other mercenaries for hire. The French and Italian Generals of the Ranjit Singh's army were veterans of Waterloo. The French veterans had fought alongside Napoleon and later joined the Sikh army with the sole purpose of foiling the British intention of recruiting Indians as soldiers in Anglo-French war. Ranjit singh had other thing in his mind; he used them to acquire modern military technology of guns. These Generals were Allard, Court, and Ventura. Two of his famous Punjabi Generals were Hari Singh Nalwa and Sham Singh Attariwala (a Sindhu Jat).

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also employed several Western medical doctors and artists. According to British Gazetteer of Punjab compiled by the Major Cunningham reported that during 1844 AD, the revenue of the Sikh Kingdom was 32.475 million rupees. Sikh's military force consisted of: 92,000 infantry soldiers, 31,800 horse cavalry soldiers and 384 field artillery guns and match locks.

The binding glue was the faith and belief in Sikhism and unconditional loyalty to their ultimate protector Raja Ranjit singh. The guerrilla warfare system had served the Khalsa confederacy very well even if the pages were borrowed from Great Maratha leader Shivaji's book. As the empire expanded, Ranjit Singh built more conventional fighting force to secure Sikh kingdom without resorting to the tactics of later Maratha rulers from Peshwa onward who were over ambitious, less honorable in his conduct and faced a horrendously long logistic problem. Maratha would have been better off shifting their capital from Puna to Delhi to nourish their ambition.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was an astute observer of military history and tactics. He had observed that British and other European colonial powers through systematic Military training, strict discipline and superior weaponry had conquered numerical superior Indian forces. He had also realized how crucial a well-drilled infantry and artillery were in modern warfare. He sought, engaged and hired military deserters from East India British company and other European armies during 1802 AD, after he relocated his capital to Amritsar. He even

sent some of his own men as spies to Ludhiana to study the British contingent's methods of training and tactics.

Ranjit Singh was the only capable ruler in South Asia in his time that had a vision and discipline and given enough military muscle could have posed the challenge to British Empire in India but he chose not to do that. Instead, he entered his kingdom into the peace treaty with British. He had employed Dutch, French and English in his military service.

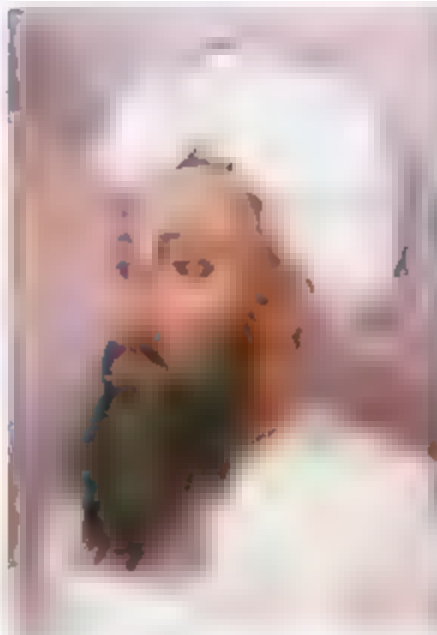
Maharaja Ranjit Singh died a natural death June 27, 1839 AD and he was succeeded by his son Kharak Singh. After his death, the kingdom started to fall apart at seam due to power struggles, intrigues and assassinations. A year later, Kharak Singh was believed to be poisoned by rival Dogra brothers. On the same day, Kharak's son Nihal Singh became the Maharaja through succession, he was wounded in a suspicious freak accident while returning from his father's funeral. As an excuse for his medical treatment, he was held captive by Dogra brothers and later found dead. Dylal Singh Dogra was forced to abandon the court of the Sikh Maharani who waited for the imminent birth of the Kanwar's child and moved herself with the family to the camp of Sher Singh. Kharak Singh's half-brother met the same fate, after laying the siege to the Lahore court of Ranjit Singh was proclaimed as Maharaja of the Sikh Kingdom only to be assassinated a few years later along with his son by the treacherous Dogra clans and their sycophants.

Finally, the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Dalip Singh, became the ruler of the Sikh Kingdom in 1849 AD. In spite of the previous treaties, the British saw this internal struggle within Sikh as an opportunity. The disputes that followed that resulted into two Anglo-Sikh wars and defeat to the Sikh, resulted into loss of the independent status of the Sikh Empire became the part of the British Empire. Various Sikh historians and English writers have given considerable details on this development, so it will be too laborious to repeat here. It is quite possible that unusually large presence of European at Ranjit's court was quite striking. The internal intrigue probably inspired by the British may have contributed to the decline of Sikh empire and mysterious death of successive Sikh rulers after Ranjit Singh. Dalip's Singh removal to England and his royal treatment gives considerable credence to this hypothesis.

The young Dalip Singh was taken to England by the British authorities and became a close friend of Queen Victoria's family. Interestingly, General Sir MacMunn wrote, "**Then were the Punjab annexed and the boy, Dalip Singh, eventually sent to be brought up in England with ample revenues.**" Dalip Singh died in Paris on October 22, 1893 AD.

The Punjab was always the bread basket of India with its fertile valley and good climate. Sikh Jats initially originated from the Central Asian scythic group and migrated to India in the past

history. They initially settled in Sindhu doab, Rajasthan and then Punjab. They are martial group of people and formed a warrior clan. As evident from the map, the Sikh empire under Ranjit controlled the strategic land routes to and from India to Asia and if British had any ambition, the independent Sikh kingdom would come in the way to enter Asian heart land. The chain of the circumstances mitigated that obstacle for Imperial Britain.



Ahamad shah Durrani (Heart) Amir of Barakzai Tribe - Mohamed Dost Diwan Mokham Singh



Battle scene with Afghan forces

Battle hardened Maratha at the third war at Panipat

Victor Jacquemont, a French missionary who visited India and met Maharaja Ranjit Singh wrote in his book: "Ranjit Singh was a shrewd ruler and posed all kinds of questions. Raja Ranjit's Singh was very inquisitive Indian, he ever met. His curiosity of other world was limitless and made up for the apathy of his country ravaged and plundered by marauders. He

inquired about India, the English, Europe, Napoleon, hell and paradise, the soul, God, the devil. There were other missionaries whom Ranjit Singh also met. Several requests to open up churches, convent schools, etc were denied by Ranjit Singh. He asked them to teach Punjabi language and Sikh scriptures instead. No wonder when British took over Punjab after Ranjit Singh's death, the convent missionary Schools opened up all over Punjab."



Dalip Singh



Golden Temple

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Appendix -1 Misls (Sardar)

The Twelve Misls-Sikh confederacies:

In the eighteenth century Sikhs were very successful in establishing twelve principalities or confederacy called Misls (Misls is an Arabic word means alike or equal). At least nine of these Misls were founded by the Jats. The history of each of the Misls founded in the eighteenth century by the Jats is briefly described below:

Bhangi Misl

This powerful Misl of the Sikhs was founded by Bhim Singh of the Jat background. The name "Bhangi" is derived from the members of the confederacy who made use of Bhang, an intoxicating drug manufactured from hemp. Bhim Singh was succeeded by his nephew named Hari Singh belonging to the Dhillon clan of the Jats. Hari Singh's sons, Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh played an instrumental role in strengthening the Misl. Also, they are credited for constructing the Bhangi fort at Amritsar (the holy city of the Sikhs in Punjab) and enlarging and beautifying the town with many noble edifices in the later part of the eighteenth century.

Kanhya Misl

The first chief of this Misl was Jai Singh, a Jat of the Sandhu clan belonging to a village named Kanah, fifteen miles from Lahore. The name of the Misl is derived from the name of Jai Singh's village and one time the Misl was the strongest of the Sikh confederacies north of the river Sutlej in Punjab.

Nakai Misl

The chief of this Misl was Hira Singh, a Jat of the Sandhu clan. The area lying between Lahore and Gogaira (now both in Pakistan) was called Naka country and during the middle of the eighteenth century A.D., Hira Singh took possession of it; thus the Misl became known as Nakai Misl.

Singhpuria Misl

This is also known as the Fyzulpuria Misl after a village near Amritsar (Punjab) called Fyzullapur. The Misl was founded by a Jat landlord named Kapur Singh who later on was popularly known as the Nawab (Chief) Kapur Singh. He died at Amritsar in 1753 AD.

Krora Singhia Misl

Sometimes it is also known as the Panjgarhia Misl, from the village of its first chief, Karora Singh. Karora Singh belonged to the Jat background and the Misl was popularly known after his name.

Nishanwala Misl

Two Jats named Sangat Singh and Mohar Singh were the founder of this Misl. These two warriors were the standard-bearers of the assembled Khalsa (baptized Sikh or pure) army, hence, the name Nishanwala was given to this Misl.

Sukerchakia Misl

This Misl was founded by Charat Singh, a Jat of the Sansi clan and grandfather of the Maharaja (great King) Ranjit Singh, the ruler of the Sikh empire of the nineteenth century. The Misl is named after the native village of Charat Singh, called Sukerchak in Amritsar district of Punjab or Manjha country.

Phulkia Misl

As per Latif, the chief of this Misl was a Jat named Phul of the Sidhu clan; thus the Misl is known by his name. Phul had seven sons and he became the ancestors of the royal families of Patiala, Nabha, and Jhind States.

Ramgarhia Misl

Latif wrote, "The founder of the Misl was Khoshal Singh, a Jat of Mouza Guga near Amritsar, Punjab. After his death he was succeeded by Nodh Singh of Sahangi also near Amritsar. Three most daring brothers named Jassa Singh, Mali Singh, and Tara Singh of Tar khan (carpenter) background and belonging to Mouza Sarsang in the Lahore district (now in Pakistan) became devout followers of Nodh Singh. After the death of Nodh Singh, Jassa Singh became the chief of the Misl. The Misl seized the fort of Ram Raouni (Fortalice of God) and then renamed it Ramgrah (God's Fort). Later on the Misl was popularly known as the Ramgarhia Misl. The largest Bunga with two watchtowers, at the Complex of the Harmandir Sahib was built by the Ramgarhia Misl. The Bunga served as home base for the Ramgarhias during the yearly visits to the Temple and also as a military barracks from which the Ramgarhias could defend the Sacred Site. A giant block of granite called the 'Coronation Stone' of the Grand Mughals is located in the second floor of the Bunga in the open balcony area. During the period when the Sikhs controlled Delhi the stone on which Emperors were installed and from which they read their edicts was removed from the Lal Killa and carted to Amritsar. This is said to be the very same stone from which the death sentences for Guru Tegh Bahadur and Banda Bahadur were pronounced.